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RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RUEAHQA/AFRICA CENTER FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/15/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [EAGR](#) [EFIN](#) [EAID](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: ECONOMIC ADVISOR, NOW A MAJOR PLAYER,
PREDICTS CHANGES IN CABINET

Classified By: Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Robert Tansey for reasons
1.4. (b & d).

¶1. (C/NF) Nigeria's Chief Economic Advisor (CEA), Dr. Tanimu Yakubu Kurfi, and CEA Desk Officer for Food and Security and U.S. Affairs, Engr. Waziri Ahmadu, joined Ambassador and Acting DCM for a two-hour working dinner at the CMR on September 15. Yakubu, who is understated compared to many senior GON officials, clearly communicated that he had the confidence of the President. He repeatedly expressed his and the President's strong interest in moving the bilateral agenda forward, not only in areas within his CEA purview, like trade and investment, but also on broader and more problematic issues, such as anti-corruption and moving the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to action so that the EFCC can receive U.S. support and to improve Nigeria's international credibility. He also willingly accepted the Ambassador's presentation of the U.S.-U.K. joint paper on the Niger Delta.

¶2. (C/NF) Just as clearly, Yakubu is now intimately involved in preparing the new slate of cabinet ministers, which he said would be announced by September 24. He as much as came out and said that the Minister and Minister of State for Finance and the Minister of Commerce and Industry may well be sent packing inter alia for not carrying out the President's instructions on liberalizing Nigeria's trade regime. Although Yakubu stayed fully engaged in the two-hour conversation, he apologized and took a call from one cabinet aspirant who he told would be able to meet with the President the next day, and seemed to be sending and receiving from his BlackBerry for the same purpose. He specifically said that he would not/not be going with the UNGA DEL himself, in order to stay back and make sure the cabinet changes went off smoothly.

¶3. (C/NF) Comment: Yakubu certainly looks like he is a rising star in the Yar'Adua regime. He has the President's confidence, from years of working together in Katsina State. He also has stated clearly that he is willing to be a problem solver on important and difficult bilateral issues, such as

EFCC. End comment.

[14](#). (SBU) Septel reports Yakubu's views on several key economic and trade issues.

SANDERS